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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR USAID, APRIL HAHN
DEPT PASS TO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
TUNIS FOR PETER MULREAN

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [KDEM](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: PARTNERS SUGGEST PRACTICAL STEPS TO MOVE FORWARD
JOINTLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

REF: Beirut 00303

Summary

¶1. (U) On March 18, Embaffs hosted their monthly electoral reform coordination meeting for U.S.-funded NGOs and local civil society partners. The objective of the meeting was to reconcile a range of coordination and strategic communication issues between the various stakeholders and discuss IFESQs new "training academy" proposal to broaden the awareness and skills of local partners on electoral reform issues. Frank talk resulted in some positive solutions to difficult issues. End Summary.

MeetingQs Agenda

¶2. (U) On March 18, Embassy hosted representatives from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER) to the third monthly electoral reform coordination meeting.

¶3. (U) Agenda items included:

- LTAQs plan for centralizing CCERQs activities
- Ironing out coordination and strategy communication
- IFES proposal for a "technical certification program" for local partners

New "Executive Secretariat" for CCER

¶4. (U) LTAQs co-executive director Khalil Gebara noted that the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform (CCER) has never had an independent office and has always been operating from three different locations, which has undermined its efficiency. Time has therefore come to centraliz activities into a single independent "executivesecretariat" office with an expanded staff that would include a project manager, a grassroots officer and a senior communication officer to be trained by NDI on political lobbying techniques. During his recent meeting with LTA in Beirut, NEA/PIQs Political Pillar Manager Owen Kirby expressed MEPIQs strong support for this initiative. LTA was asked to further define the work requirements for the CCER secretariat to present at the next meeting.

Formalizing Coordination and Communication Strategy

¶5. (U) Gebara expressed concern about IFES meetings with political leaders and members of parliament, which often overlapped with

CCERQs political lobbying activities. IFES Country Director Richard Chambers clarified that these visits were solely educational. He provides briefings for political party members, but also inquires about the formal positions of each party, which has been misinterpreted. He pledged to notify CCER of these visits ahead of time, to be clear about the educational nature of his briefings and to share summaries of these discussions. Special Assistant Jacqueline Ward asked IFES and CCER to engage in systematic information sharing through CCERQs "executive secretariat."

Training Academy

¶6. (U) IFES Country Director Richard Chambers underlined the need for CCER to broaden the awareness and skills of its local partners to better engage political parties on electoral reform issues. He proposed to set up an academy to train a group of fifteen CCER core members on the following topics: achieving international standards for elections; independent elections commission proposal; voting age and universal suffrage; campaign finance regulations and media regulations; electoral systems; voting and counting procedures; out of country voting and absentee balloting; disabled access; voter registration; processes for legislative change in Lebanon; working with the authorities. At the end of the four-day training, participants will receive a certificate which will qualify them to train other CCER members, Chambers added. NDI will supplement IFESQs work by providing workshops on political lobbying, strategic planning and effective public communications.

¶7. Special Assistant Jacqueline Ward asked IFES, NDI and CCER to develop a joint action plan to get the academy up and running as soon as possible.

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